

Truman's Address to Congress (12th March 1947) - _____ ?

Author: _____

Source: _____

Context: _____

Addresses: _____

Language: _____

LINES	<p>MAKING SENSE OF THE TEXT</p>  <p><i>With this Truman actually says that...</i> <i>In this passage Truman proposes/ puts forward/ suggests/makes clear ...</i> <i>The statement represents an appeal/ a commitment to/ a promise to ...</i></p>	<p>CONTEXTUALIZING STATEMENTS</p>  <p><i>Here Truman refers to...</i> <i>The context of this statement is the year 1947 which was marked by ..</i> <i>The situation in Greece and Turkey demanded...</i> <i>By 1947 the USA/the UDSSR/ Great Britain had...</i></p>	<p>IDENTIFYING THE AUTHOR'S INTENTION</p>  <p><i>Truman wants the Americans to..</i> <i>He aims at convincing..</i> <i>Truman's overall aim is to...</i> <i>Truman intends to...</i> <i>He has the following objectives....</i> <i>Truman seeks...</i></p>	<p>INFERRING THE IMPACT ON THE ADDRESSEE</p>  <p><i>The members of Congress might have felt inclined to...</i> <i>Truman must have been convincing because....</i> <i>The opposition could have opposed Truman's plan on the bases of ...</i> <i>Truman's camp might have ...</i></p>
II. 2 – 7				
II. 8 - 15				

II. 16 - 21				
II. 22 - 24				
II.25 - 27				

Interpretation: _____

Evaluation: _____

Truman's Address to Congress (12th March 1947) – a declaration of war to the USSR?

Author: Truman, Harry S. (1884 – 1972), President of the United States (1945 – 1953). He was chosen as a running mate of F.D. Roosevelt in the 1944 elections and thus became Vice-President. When Roosevelt died in April 1945 he automatically became President.

Source: primary source, parliamentary speech

Context: Yalta and Potsdam Conferences, Sovietization of Eastern Europe, Greek Civil War, conflict about Turkish sea straits, Marshall Plan

Addressees: Members of US Congress, American public, world public

Language: academic style, but very biased, use of persuasive rhetorical means

LINES	MAKING SENSE OF THE TEXT  <p><i>With this Truman actually says that...</i> <i>In this passage Truman proposes/ puts forward/ suggests/makes clear ...</i> <i>The statement represents an appeal/ a commitment to/ a promise to ...</i></p>	CONTEXUALIZING STATEMENTS  <p><i>Here Truman refers to...</i> <i>The context of this statement is the year 1947 which was marked by ...</i> <i>The situation in Greece and Turkey demanded...</i> <i>By 1947 the USA/the UDSSR/ Great Britain had...</i></p>	IDENTIFYING THE AUTHOR'S INTENTION  <p><i>Truman wants the Americans to...</i> <i>He aims at convincing..</i> <i>Truman's overall aim is to...</i> <i>Truman intends to...</i> <i>He has the following objectives....</i> <i>Truman seeks...</i></p>	INFERRING THE IMPACT ON THE ADDRESSEE  <p><i>The members of Congress might have felt inclined to...</i> <i>Truman must have been convincing because....</i> <i>The opposition could have opposed Truman's plan on the bases of ...</i> <i>Truman's camp might have ...</i></p>
II. 1 - 13	Truman stresses the significance of the European situation for the USA by explaining the "friend and foe" situation in Greece and by referring to the British disability to further support the Royalists in Greece.	Truman explicitly refers to the Greek civil war, which was believed to be supported by Stalin on the communist side. The post-war situation was marked by a decline of the European powers especially Great Britain and the rise of USA as a superpower.	Truman wants to convince the addressee of the necessity of US involvement in favour of the Greek government	The members of Congress and the US citizens might feel inclined to follow the president's line of reasoning and urged to take over responsibility for Europe.
II. 15 - 27	Truman presents the liberal political system as ideal and the communist political system as evil.	Here Truman refers to the Sovietization of Eastern Europe after the war seen from the Western liberal point of view.	Truman aims at polarizing and mobilizing the addressees by presenting "friend and foe".	US Congress and citizens might feel confirmed that they are representing the "good side", that has to fight evil.

II. 29 - 35	Truman presents the measures he believes are to be taken concerning the communist takeover in Europe stressing the people's right of national self-determination. To emphasize the importance of this passage he uses the rhetoric means of anaphora and climax.	The containment policy put forward in the Truman Doctrine was one of the most influential approaches taken by the USA during the Cold War up to the Vietnam War.	Truman intends to persuade the addressee to provide money for containment policy and to give up idea of Isolationism.	Truman must have been convincing because money for containment policy was provided and the USA did not return to Isolationism.
II. 37 - 39	Truman presents poverty and strife as the main causes of communism.	In 1947 the USA set up the Marshall Plan which provided financial aid to the war torn European countries.	Truman wants to justify economic and financial aid as primary means to fight communism.	US Congress and citizens might prefer the idea of financial to that of military involvement.
II. 41 - 42	Truman stresses USA's responsibility as leading superpower and hints at the dangers of not assuming that leadership.	The statement is symptomatic for the emergence of the bipolar world of the Cold War, with two leading superpowers confronting each other.	Truman wants to prevent US withdrawal from Europe and a possible return to Isolationism.	US Congress and citizens might feel national pride and willingness to take over international responsibility.

Interpretation: By convincing Congress to provide the financial means to support the war-torn European states economically, US President Truman turned the USA away from a path of Isolationism which many Americans would have liked to return to after the war. Instead Truman presents the USSR as a totalitarian foe against which the USA as a leading superpower have to stand up using primarily economic means like the Marshall Plan to secure influence in Europe. The speech therefore made the Cold War official on part of the USA, but the conflict had of course started already during the wartime conferences.

Evaluation: With this speech US President Truman introduced a clear policy of containing the spread of communism, which became known as the Truman Doctrine and would mark American policy until the end of the 1960s. It can therefore be regarded as a declaration of war to Stalin and the USSR, making clear that the USA would not allow the USSR to extend its sphere of influence in Europe and later anywhere else in the world using not only economic but also military means to do so.

On the other hand Truman's speech only made official what had already started during the wartime conferences and could not have come as a surprise to Stalin. In his Fulton speech in March 1946 Winston Churchill had already accused Stalin of erecting an "Iron Curtain" in Europe, so the conflict between the superpowers had already become public long before Truman's speech.